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Allen legislation will combat invasive plant species

LANSING – Michigan would be better protected against invasive plant species like Eurasian milfoil and hydrilla under legislation introduced Thursday in the Michigan Senate, Sen. Jason Allen announced.

"Zebra mussels and Asian carp are not the only invasive species that threaten the welfare of our waters," said Allen, R-Traverse City. "Foreign plants pose a serious threat to Michigan's water habitats. In our efforts to fight invasive species, we must not forget foreign vegetation."

Senate Bills 1420-1427 would regulate the sale and possession of certain non-native plants that pose a threat to habitats in Michigan. The legislation is similar to prohibitions put in place earlier this year to protect Michigan's waterways from invasion by non-native fish species.

The package also would establish a Non-native Species Advisory Council. Under Senate Bill 1425, sponsored by Allen, the council is charged with establishing criteria for identifying infested waterways and making recommendations regarding the state's efforts to eradicate invasive species. The council also would report annually to the Legislature with recommendations for additions to the lists of invasive species and infested waterways.

"This legislation will bring Michigan one step closer to eradicating the invasive species that threaten the well-being of our waterways," Allen said. "By regulating the sale and possession of invasive species, we can help curb the spread of these predators."

The Great Lakes Conservation Task Force Report, issued in 2002, made broad recommendations for important steps that the state should take to protect our water quality. One of the most important recommendations was to implement laws that will guard against further invasion of both non-native fish and plants.

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